

SECTION 3 DISTRICT DIRECTOR'S DUTIES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Starting as Conservation District Director

A director officially takes office when the election results have been certified and a notarized oath of office is on file with the Michigan Department of Agriculture. This applies to an incumbent as well as an appointee and a director elected for the first term.

Rights and Privileges Conservation District Directors are Entitled

As an elected official of a unit of government, a director:

- Is covered by workers' compensation while performing District director duties.
- May receive a per diem of up to the amount that members of the Commission of Agriculture receive.
- Must be responsible for all withholding taxes per IRS requirements.
- Is not personally liable for actions of the board while performing duties of director.

Duties of District Board Members

A Conservation District is a governmental subdivision of this state with statutory powers and responsibilities to carry out a program of natural resources conservation and encourage wise land management. As locally elected public officials, District directors are responsible for the operation and management of the Conservation District. District directors develop policy, which is carried out by employees and resource personnel available to the District. An effective District board uses all the resources available to the District to carry out programs. Such resources include District employees, governmental agencies, private groups, individuals, industry, the natural resources of the District, and more.

Listed are basic duties performed by Conservation District directors, either as an individual or as a member of a District board of directors:

1. Attend and participate in all board meetings and functions.
2. Make decisions in response to all proposals presented to the board.
3. Cooperate with fellow board members in establishing District policies.
4. Establish, review, and understand Conservation District policies.

5. Participate in setting District priorities in providing technical assistance to land users.
6. Employ personnel and determine their qualifications, duties, and compensation. Keep abreast of performance and provide administrative supervision. Understand working agreements established with personnel and comply with all conditions.
7. Participate in developing annual plans of work.
8. Participate in developing, publishing, and distributing annual reports.
9. Keep informed on legislation and policies of local, state, and federal government pertaining to conservation problems. This includes maintaining contacts with local, state, and national public officials to keep them informed of the District's activities and the District residents' conservation needs.
10. Prepare for, conduct, and participate in Conservation District board meetings and attend Michigan Association of Conservation District (MACD) state and area meetings, and state and regional training sessions conducted by the Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA) and partners.
11. To be fully effective, directors should miss no more than three (3) District board meetings per year. (See "Recommended List of District Policies".)
12. Encourage land users and public entities to become aware of and utilize the services of the District.
13. Serve as the "up-front" person for the District by representing the District at public functions sponsored by the District and at functions related to natural resource conservation activities.
14. Sponsor and actively participate in educational activities to inform people about natural resource conservation programs and to enlist their support.
15. Cooperate with fellow board members to secure adequate operating funds for the District. Examples: county appropriations; state appropriations; tree seedling retail sales; etc.
16. Establish and maintain communications with public and private leaders within the Conservation District who can support the District program.
17. Cooperate with fellow board members in establishing sound business practices required for adequate accounting and financial management of the District's fiscal affairs in accordance with state law.

18. Cooperate with fellow board members in publishing information articles, newsletters, etc.
19. Know the functions of other agencies that operate in the District.
20. Be familiar with the Directors' Handbook.

Section 9307 of Public Act 463 of 1998, as amended, states: "The directors shall designate a chairperson annually." The chairperson is the only office that a Conservation District must have. Nevertheless, Conservation Districts have found it necessary (and MDA strongly recommends) to provide the other offices and designations to cover the District work load in a systematic fashion.

In addition to the chair, most Districts have found it necessary to designate the officers of vice-chair, treasurer, and secretary. Districts may wish to combine certain offices (secretary/treasurer) or leave the offices separate. It is the District's prerogative and responsibility to assign the duties of the offices designated by the board. Typically, the duties and responsibilities are as follows:

Duties of the Chair

1. Leads all District meetings in accordance with the District's locally accepted practices.
2. Calls the meeting to order at the appointed time.
3. Presides over all District meetings.
4. Announces the business before the board in its proper order.
5. Preserves order and decorum.
6. When necessary, authenticates by his/her signature all acts, orders, and proceedings of the District.
7. Calls for a vote on all properly presented motions.
8. Votes in case of a tie vote, roll call vote, or vote by ballot.
9. Receives input from other board members, administrative/executive director, NRCS Conservationist and others to assemble topics for the agenda for the next meeting.
10. Acts as, or appoints, a liaison to the board and the Conservation District employees.

Duties of the Vice-Chair

1. Is familiar with the duties of the chairperson.
2. Presides as chairperson in his/her absence.

Duties of the Secretary

1. Is familiar with the duties of the chairperson.
2. Presides as chairperson in absence of vice-chairperson and chairperson. (Note: A quorum, a majority of directors, must be present.)
3. Supervises all written reports.
4. Supervises the recording of the minutes of all District meetings for their accuracy and compliance with the Open Meetings Act. (See Section 7 of Public Act 267 of 1976 for details concerning the Open Meetings Act or <http://www.michiganlegislature.org/mileg.asp?page=PublicActs> to view a copy of the Act.)
5. Supervises the preparation of the Annual Report. Attends planning meeting for annual report with the administrator/executive director and reviews the final draft before publication.

Duties of the Treasurer

1. Supervises the paying of all bills of the District.
2. Verifies the District's financial standing.
3. Deposits the District funds in compliance with Public Act 500 of 1978.
4. Presents treasurer's report at board meetings.
5. Signs and verifies all bank statements.
6. Ensures that the Conservation District is in compliance with all aspects of the Michigan Conservation District Uniform Accounting Procedures Manual.

Operation's Grant Activities Required of a Conservation District Director

The Michigan legislature has given Conservation District (CD) directors broad powers to develop and carry out natural resources conservation programs. To carry out these powers, directors must be knowledgeable of CD grant obligations. They have the responsibility to take a leadership role in the following:

- Participate in development of resource assessments, strategic plans of action, and in developing and carrying out the annual plan of action.
- Establish the priority of work.
- Provide for the keeping of a full and accurate record (minutes) of all proceedings and all resolutions, regulations, and orders issued or adopted.
- Provide for the preparation, publishing, and distribution of an annual report.
- Secure needed funds for adequate District operations and oversee proper dispersal of funds according to state and federal law. **It is important to note that it is the director's responsibility to secure funding by setting priorities, identifying sources, meeting with other public officials, and keeping open channels of communication with conservation organizations.** Staff will implement the necessary applications, but should not be expected to make all the contacts.
- Prepare an annual budget and maintain an approved bookkeeping system that reflects all income and expenditures. Prepare an annual financial statement and provide for an annual audit.
- Annually designate board chairperson and other board officers.

Recommended List of District Policies

The following, recommended by the Michigan Department of Agriculture and the Michigan Association of Conservation Districts, is a list of subjects on which Conservation Districts should adopt policy:

- Structure of the District (chain of command, delegation of activities to executive director/administrator)
- Board Organization (board meeting attendance, authority of board members, committees of the board, public forum during board meetings, board officers)
- Employment/Personnel (make consistent with state and federal laws)

- Conflict of Interest (Board and Staff)
- District Finances (financial management, budgeting, signing checks, use of credit card, investment practices, spending authorizations)
- Facilities/Equipment
- Administrative procedures for conduct of board meetings

A Note on Diversity of the Board

Diversity within the conservation partnership refers to the concept of inclusiveness affecting both the clientele being served and those that are coordinating and providing the services. It should embrace all cultures and all people who use, manage, and receive the benefits of our natural resources.

The members of the Conservation District board should reflect the diversity of the clients that the directors serve in their District. Directors should actively encourage women and minorities to run for District director. This may start by first recruiting individuals to serve on a committee or by appointing someone to complete a director's term that has been vacated prematurely to introduce people to the District and its function.

Deposit of Conservation District Funds

Conservation Districts as political subdivisions (local units of government) of this state are allowed to deposit funds in all forms of saving plans, including regular passbook savings offered by banks which are insured by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation; in bonds or other direct obligations of the United States, or an agency or instrumentality of the United States; in savings and loan associations which are members of the Federal Savings and Loan Corporation; or in credit unions which are insured by the National Credit Union Administration (Public Act 500 of 1978).

Bonding Policy

All District directors and employees entrusted with funds or property shall obtain a minimum \$10,000 surety bond. Districts with total ending cash balances exceeding \$10,000 on September 30 shall carry surety bonds at least equal to that amount.